Independent Reading Post: 2/Semester: 1

The Alchemist

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The second part of the novel, *The Alchemist* continues to follow Santiago. Santiago is faced with a tough decision. He wants to move forward in his “personal destiny” but doesn’t want to leave his sheep, or the hope of seeing the merchant’s daughter again. Santiago then chose to search for the treasure, forcing him to abandon sheep. He learns that he needs to go toward the Pyramids in Egypt to find the treasure (this information was obtained from the Old Man/the King of Salem). Santiago ponders the two stones that the King gave him, wondering about their importance in his journey. Santiago can ask a question and the stones will help him answer them. Continuing, Santiago then boards a boat, and travels to Africa. When Santiago arrives in Africa, he is a little judgmental, meaning that he sees Muslims and makes sly comments in his head, as to their appearance and actions. While traveling through a market near the port, Santiago realizes that he needs a way to get to the pyramids to Egypt. While in a market place, Santiago tried to find a guide, but couldn’t find anyone. When he finally found someone, he gave them his money, only for them to run away with his money, leaving him [Santiago] with nothing. But “…he had faith,” (Coelho 42). Santiago noticed a crystal shop, went in, and proposed a trade. He said to the merchant that he would clean the merchant’s crystal in the front window if the merchant would give him some food. After cleaning the two went to a nearby café. Santiago learned that he would never have enough money to get from Tangier (that is where he currently is) to Egypt. Santiago then conjured an idea to work at the shop to buy a flock of sheep, and then the section ends.

This section of the novel was pretty ironic actually. The layout of this reading xwas truly a cause and effect type, meaning, first a character did this, and the he did that. I think it added to the way it was read, helping me visualize a perfect motion picture in my mind. I mentioned that the section was ironic. It was so, simply because Santiago trusted a “guide” with his money to get him to Egypt, and the “guide” ended up stealing his money. It just goes to show you really cannot trust anyone, and that is the last thing that Santiago needed. He was going out on a limb traveling to find this treasure and he realizes the kind of people he is interacting with. I really liked how the author tells the reader each character’s emotions because it gave me background information in terms of character development. I feel for Santiago because the poor guy gave up his life (sheepherding) to find a treasure and nothing is going for him. I think that he is really bold and strong hearted. Santiago is in a new place, meeting new people, around a new culture trying to maneuver Africa. He gave up everything for the treasure. He is the exact opposite from me. I would never give up everything to go out on a limb. Especially if it was a “what if” adventure. Also, my largest fear is getting lost. I don’t like things out of my comfort zone.

This section of the books truly embodies the class essential question and objectives. First of all, there are many characteristic that span time and culture. A prime example from this section was a lack of trust. It seems that trust, or rather the lack of it spans time and culture. Santiago was apprehensive in giving his money to the “guide,” but he went out on a limb, and trusted someone. So obviously, a lack of trust spans time and culture. Another characteristic spanning time and culture would be adaptability. From the beginning of time, humans have adapted to their surroundings, slowly but surely making the necessary changes to eventually evolve and or move forward. Santiago didn’t have enough money, so he adapted. He took a job, was going to earn money, and then buy a flock of sheep to get to Egypt.

The section emphasized the understanding of human nature. As mentioned, a lack of trust was explained in the novel, which correlates with understanding human nature. It seems that in terms of human psychological reasoning, trust is not the first and foremost aspect of reasoning. Whether you have known someone for ten seconds or ten years, apprehensiveness will always come first before trust is ensured with someone. It would make sense that as humans, we even have issues trusting ourselves, let alone other people. Other aspect of human nature that was emphasized in the reading was judging others. Santiago judged the Muslims in Africa. He did this due to ignorance of another culture, a lack of knowledge of the culture, and rumors that were being circulated where his travels were.

There was on key component of this section that helped us understand human roles and behaviors. Santiago’s way of thinking really got the reader to think about their own way of thinking. He uses reason, prior knowledge, and logic in order to decipher various issues that may pop up from time to time. First, when he arrived in Africa, he navigated the confusing market by following others. He thought about each step he made. By understanding they way we as humans think, it helps us understand human roles and behavior. Obviously Santiago is a sheepherder. But how does a sheepherder think? What are their thought processes? Then, humans need to take into account, age. Santiago is a teenager. He is naïve, young, and new to the world. Concluding, there is more to a person than their title. The book *The Alchemist* helps us understand how someone else thinks, and how they end up at their conclusions.

Finally, the novel helps us to understand human ideals. Santiago, a boy just trying to obtain a treasure, and learn about a new world, is seeking the truth of society. He wants to learn more. Unlike many other sheepherders, Santiago can read. He gets bored with books, so he tries to learn in other ways. He learns about people, places, language, and knowledge itself. Santiago is not only trying to find the treasure, but he is trying to find knowledge as well. Santiago doesn’t want to stop learning, he wants to learn something new everyday.